

Profiling a Learner – A Descriptive Review

Adapted from *Inside/Outside: Teacher Research and Knowledge* by M. Cochran-Smith and S. Lytle (1993), Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

Using the information you have collected so far, add to your **Learner's Profile** by describing what you know about the student using the five categories outlined below. Note the areas in which you do not have as much information as you would like to have.

1. Physical Presence and Gestures

- Characteristic gestures and expressions: How are these visible in the student's face, hands, and body attitudes? How do these vary in response to what circumstances (e.g., inside and outdoors, hallways and classroom, group activities and independent work, extra-curricular and class activities)?
- Characteristic level of energy: How would you describe the student's rhythm and pace? How does it vary?
- How would you describe the student's voice (rhythm, expressiveness, and inflection)?

2. Disposition

- How would you describe the student's characteristic temperament and its range (e.g., intense, even, lots of ups and downs)?
- How are feelings expressed: Fully? Rarely? How do you "read" the student's feelings? Where and how are they visible? What is the student's emotional tone or "color" (e.g., vivid, bright, serene)?

3. Relationships with Peers and Adults

- Does the student have friends? How would you characterize these attachments? Are they consistent? Changeable?
- Is the student recognized within the class? Within specific groups? How is the student's position within the class or groups expressed by others?
- Is the student comfortable in class? How would you describe the student's casual, day-to-day contact with others? How does that vary?
- When there are tensions, how do they get resolved?
- How would you describe the student's relationship to you? To other adults within the school?
- How would you describe the student's relationship to adults outside the school setting?

4. Activities and Interests

- What are the student's preferred activities? Do these reflect underlying interests that are visible to you? For example, does drawing or story writing center on recurrent and related topics or themes?
- How would you describe the range of the student's interests? Which interests are intense, passionate? How do you know?
- How would you characterize the student's engagement with projects (e.g., quick, methodical, slapdash, thorough)? Is the final product important to the student? What is the response to errors or mishaps? To frustrations?
- Are there media that have a strong appeal for the student (e.g., paint, books, computer games, film, sketches)?

5. Formal Learning

- What is the characteristic approach to a new subject or process or direction? In learning, what does the student rely on (e.g., observation, memory, trial and error, steps and sequence, in getting the whole picture, context)? How does that learning approach vary from subject to subject? Or from topic/skill to topic/skill within your classroom? What is the student's characteristic attitude toward learning?
- How would you characterize the student as a thinker? What ideas and content have appeal? Is there a speculative streak? A problem-solving one? A gift for analogy and metaphor? For image? For reason and logic? For intuition? For the imaginative leap? For fantasy?
- What are the student's preferred subjects or topic areas? What conventions and skills come easily? Which are difficult?
- How would you describe the processes, tasks, or skills within your content area that engage the student?